

The intellectual capitalist

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Forging a new discipline and profession

To construct the knowledge economy, you need people with the tools to do it. A lack of interdisciplinary focus in academia and in industry means that they are few and far between

New roles for conducting knowledge-based business require new education and training to support their development. However, for the most part, very few programmes have been created to forge a new profession at the interface of intellectual property and business development. Why is it so difficult to overcome the educational inertia of the industrial paradigm and whose responsibility is it to get the ball rolling?

Breaking down organisational resistance

One thing you learn as a manager of almost any organisation is that change is most likely looked upon as a dirty word. Ironically, academia is no exception. Creating a new discipline is much more difficult than generating new knowledge within an existing discipline, and merging existing disciplines to form a new interdisciplinary discipline is next to impossible. While different academic disciplines collaborate from time to time, you will probably not find them collocated in permanent university structures co-developing new interdisciplinary theory and normative models. In academia it is horses and donkeys that rule, not mules. This needs to change.

In the business world, barriers also exist to separate professionals from forging interdisciplinary capabilities. In industry, the classic line organisation incentivises the specialist, not the generalist, while many countries specifically regulate against lawyers and patent attorneys engaging in business development with other professionals. With patent attorneys with no business training focused on patent office exams and MBAs with no knowledge of intellectual property, the specialisation gap is as wide as ever. Knowledge-based business development mandates operating at the interface of

management, economics, law and technology, but tearing down traditional walls will require a great deal of institutional entrepreneurship in both academic and industrial settings.

Overcoming professional path dependence

It is unsurprising that most law students become lawyers and engineering students become engineers. Education has evolved to support the industrial division of labour that Adam Smith illuminated long ago. This is especially true in countries that have publicly financed higher education, where university education is primarily designed to deliver master-level education in one discipline with limited opportunities for double degrees or interdisciplinary study.

Even when multiple degrees are possible, the lack of interdisciplinary education would require people to study separate degrees in engineering, law and business. This not only means great expense in time and money, but also lacks the integrative red thread that binds such subjects into the coherent toolbox that knowledge-based business developers really need.

It is not sufficient to teach students one course in law, one course in technology and one course in business management. In order for a new discipline to develop, knowledge-based business processes such as IP strategy, open innovation, brand management, early innovation development and venture creation must be taught in an interdisciplinary context.

This allows for engineers to become better engineers and lawyers to become better lawyers, not engineers to become specialists in the law and vice versa. For example, lawyers need to understand information technology in order to understand and manage copyright and virtual product strategies properly, but they don't need to become IT engineers. Engineers need to understand IPR regulations as tools for technology development, but don't need to be lawyers *per se*. In fact, you could argue that engineers need to know more about patents

than most general JD/LLM candidates who will probably never practise IPR law.

Generating a new pedagogic approach

Building a new knowledge-based business discipline and profession requires the creation of a new set of theoretical models to develop instrumental skills and tools. The interdisciplinary complexity of the field does not lend itself well to conventional pedagogy. Simply reading books, listening to lectures and taking written exams will not build the proper capabilities.

A more proactive pedagogy that combines leading research and practice is necessary both to develop a relevant curriculum and to build meaningful instrumental skills grounded in operational theory. In the pioneering world of knowledge-based business, higher education must operate at the interface of research and practice, a place where universities have traditionally been too uninterested in innovative pedagogy and companies too opaque at the frontier of innovative business practices.

The need for a joint responsibility

It is not practically possible to build a new academic discipline without also creating a new professional role or identity. For example, graduates from our ICM masters programme at CIP cannot simply replace a retiring knowledge-based business workforce. Instead, they need to build the profession themselves, as roles often don't exist or don't exist in the interdisciplinary form they are trained for.

Academia and industry need to unite in accepting responsibility for constructing the knowledge economy. After all, knowledge is only as valuable as the people managing it.

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